

Alamo Today

February 2009

Serving Alamo, Diablo and Surrounding Communities



A 2nd Opportunity to Meet the Candidates
 February 12th 7-9pm
 Creekside Community Church
 See page 29 for details

The 15 candidates running for Alamo Town Council are pictured left to right: John W. Morrow, Kevin G. Morrow, Bob Connelly, Brad Waite, Vishwas More, Roger Smith, Diane Barley, Steve Mick, Vicki Koc, Randy Nahas, Grace Schmidt, Karen McPherson, Karl K. Niyati, Dennis Johnson and Joseph A. Rubay.

No Right on Red Revisited

By John Lineweaver and Alisa Corstorphine

In addition to the 105 emails and 27 phone calls to the Supervisors office, over 40 people turned out at the January 8th meeting of the Alamo Roads Advisory Committee. A vast majority were present to voice displeasure with one or both sets of the No Right On Red signage, that had been installed at the intersection of Stone Valley Road and Danville Blvd. Most spoke against the signage (hereinafter, Signage A) that stopped northbound traffic on Danville Blvd. from turning east onto Stone Valley Road while the red light halted

See *No Right on Red* continued on page 38



After less than a two-year stint as the redesigned YardBIRDS-Home Depot, the Alamo store is closing as part of a restructuring decision by the Home Depot parent company. A close-out sale has already begun and the store will shutter for good by spring.

Candidate's Faire Draws a Crowd

On January 22nd the Alamo Women's Club was packed with more than 200 people coming to talk to the 15 candidates running for the proposed

Alamo Town Council. Sponsored by the Alamo Chamber of Commerce and the Alamo Community Foundation,



the two-hour faire allowed the community to get to know the individuals who are running.

The Alamo Improvement Association will be providing a final opportunity to get to talk to the candidates on February 12th from 7-9pm at Creekside Community Church located at 1350 Danville Blvd in Alamo. Voters will cast their ballots for Measure A in the March 3rd election which decides if Alamo will become a town, and if so which five of the 15 candidates will be placed on the new Town Council.

For more information on the individuals running go to pages 16-18.

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Until the election, Alamo Today will dedicate space to hear from readers regarding incorporation. Letters must be 200 words or fewer and include your first and last name, address and daytime phone number. All letters are subject to verification

and editing, and will be published at the editors' discretion as space allows. Email to editor@alamotoday.com.

Dear Editor:

I graduated from Monte Vista High School in 1971 and always remembered the rural atmosphere of Alamo. When my family returned in 1994, I was struck by Alamo's still rural feeling, which vastly influenced our decision to locate and raise our family here.

But changes are jeopardizing Alamo's rural nature, and I believe that incorporation is needed to protect it. The studies conducted for incorporation have convinced me that revenue flow will be adequate to support the Town of Alamo.

I believe the County will view Alamo's high property tax base as their "cash cow" to compensate for loss of property taxes in other parts of the county. I prefer our property taxes be spent on Alamo's needs. The Sheriff's department is already stretched over a large area, and with crime increasing, police coverage will be spread thinner in the unincorporated areas. I believe incorporation will give Alamo better, more consistent police protection. The County is trying to pay down a \$1.7 billion liability for employee benefits that it has not saved money to pay. Incorporation would end our liability for these benefits.

Alamo needs to incorporate to maintain its rural atmosphere and allay risk in this economy.

Kathy Tate, Alamo

Dear Editor:

Twenty years ago our family moved to Alamo. There was no stoplight at Miranda or Hemme; Mona Lisa hill was a pristine hillside; the old fruit stand stood on the Boulevard; Las Trampas Ridge was open to anyone who wanted to go there, and more. But, twenty years have passed and things have changed. Some I prefer, others not.

Why this history?

Because when changes were being made that I felt strongly about, there was no easy outlet to air my opinion. Sure, heading to Martinez was an option, but Supervisors all support one another's positions so when my Supervisor takes a stand, it's a done deal. My compadres' voices are puny and unheard. I've seen it happen!

Why I want Alamo to incorporate is to keep change at a bare minimum. Because change will happen, I want to go to my Town Council to plead my case. Alamo is too big for the County and I theorize that they really don't want to oversee us any longer.

Let's incorporate our Town, let's have a sense of community, let's develop our own traditions! I love my community, that's why I will vote yes on Measure A to incorporate!

Nancy Dommies, Alamo

Dear Editor

I'm opposed to incorporating Alamo. I've read the letters extolling the virtues of incorporation and the Fiscal Analysis, prepared for LAFCO, which paints a picture of Alamo rolling in money into the future. I specifically question THE generous cash reserve Alamo WILL have in ten years, as quoted by so many.

A January 24 Contra Costa Times article says Concord must reduce its budget by millions due to shortfalls in sales and property tax income. Another article says the same about Oakley, but they only need to cut hundreds of thousands of dollars!

In my professional career, I have built mathematical models for business and learned public financing while serving on a school board. The financial model used to justify Alamo's incorporation made oversimplified assumptions and ignored the variability of the real world. To use a fixed growth percent to project many factors in non-inflated dollars (using the "miracle" of compounding), or to infer that fractions of people can be hired, is absurd. We should consider our experiences in 2008.

What is the probability of Alamo NOT having such a rosy future? No one would claim economic bad years or calamities cannot happen in Alamo. Incorporate Alamo? The gods—or someone—must be crazy!

Stan Smith, Alamo

Dear Editor,

Having spent her entire career in the public sector, Grace Schmidt is outstanding among the fifteen candidates. As a former Congressional Field Representative for the 10th District she has experience and knowledge of governmental planning, funding and budgeting and will be able to hit the ground running. No on-the-job training.

Working with her for many years on neighborhood issues we have seen her abilities first-hand. She always comes to the table prepared. In a group dynamic she is a natural leader who is solution-oriented while making certain all views are heard and all sides of an issue explored. Alamo is fortunate to have Grace running for the council and we will all benefit from her expertise, dedication and passion.

Bruce & Ellen Miller, Alamo

Dear Editor,

Horses in Alamo?

There will always be horses in Alamo. Some opposed to incorporation are trying to scare Alamo voters by saying that the first act of the new town council will be to remove horses from Alamo. My family has owned and operated cattle ranches for over 30 years where horses are not only a means of transportation but an indispensable tool used in the cattle business. Although there are only a few areas in the San Ramon Valley where cattle still graze, horses still dot the hillsides and grace hundreds of backyards. It is very easy to find horse properties in both Danville and San Ramon and neither the Danville Town Council nor the San Ramon City Council is contemplating the removal of horses from their boarders. As a founding member of AIM and the current owner and landlord to several horses, I can assure you that if there were any possibility that horses would fall into disfavor with the new Alamo Town Council, I would have fought the movement at its outset. And if I hadn't my wife Jan, the horse project leader for Tassajara 4-H, would have found another place to board me.

Randy Nahas, Alamo

Dear Editor:

Alamo incorporation is good for Alamo for three simple reasons:

1-Decisions affecting Alamo residents need to be made by Alamo residents.

Today, decisions that affect our land use, our traffic, our police protection and our parks are made by 5 County Supervisors who do not reside in Alamo, do not have to live with the consequences of their decisions and who are struggling with larger issues than those items that bug us. Alamo Incorporation will allow Alamo voters to select a town council who live here and will be held accountable for the decisions they make.

2-Alamo's economics will be stronger after incorporation.

The county is not required to spend all of the tax revenue collected from Alamo residents for services to Alamo residents. The exhaustive (~150 page) LAFCO study of the economics showed that Alamo can form a local government, provide the current level of services AND generate a surplus to enhance our community over coming years.

3-Incorporation will make Alamo a stronger community.

The first task to be performed by a new Alamo town council will be to generate Alamo's General Plan. A detailed look at what our town, working together can be in the future- now that will be exciting.

Ed Chiverton, Alamo

Dear Editor:

Lafayette, Moraga, Orinda are all wealthy communities with older homes whose assessed value is below their market value, generating property tax, just like Alamo. In addition, Orinda's budget is more than twice that of Alamo, and Lafayette's is more than four times larger. They incorporated under the banner of "No New Taxes", just like Alamo. Yet, because of insufficient revenues, they continually propose "More New Taxes" because they have too many broken roads and too few police. (SRVTimes 3/12/07, 11/5/07, 12/20/07). Lamorinda had to combine police services to provide sufficient protection. (SRVTimes 10/2008). Incorporation of Alamo means stepping into this same pit of financial quicksand.

Concerned about rising Sheriff contract costs, the Danville Town Manager said, "The Sheriff doesn't have the ability to anticipate what the costs will be." (SRV-Times 7/18/08) Yet, this is the same Sheriff from whom the proponent paid CFA consultant got his 10 year future cost projections!

Eight months ago no one could predict the financial meltdown on Wall Street and the collapse of the entire economy. Yet, Alamo residents are being asked to believe in the hired consultant's crystal ball predictions of revenues and expenses 10 years into the future! No on incorporation.

Richard Stenger, Alamo

Dear Editor:

An Alamo incorporation opponent says the devil we know is better than the devil we don't know.

I don't see Contra Costa County, Alamo's local government, as the devil. My experience with local government shows me the five members of the County Board of Supervisors are smart, knowledgeable, respectable, hard-working officials.

But they are wrestling with problems far beyond the scope of issues important to Alamo -- a \$1.7 billion unfunded liability for employee benefits, a 2008 \$1.3 billion loss in pension investments they must compensate with taxpayer dollars, and falling housing assessed valuations in other parts of the County.

Their choices are to cut services, to increase revenue-generating development -- for which they must mitigate traffic impacts in developed areas with road and intersection widening projects -- and to try to raise taxes in unincorporated areas.

They've already cut the Sheriff's budget three years running, and they've tried to widen Alamo's downtown intersection to accommodate overflow freeway traffic.

The County, not the devil, is big local government trying to meet its responsibilities to its own constituents and thousands of employees. Alamo needs to incorporate as small local government, with minimal employees, to meet its responsibilities to its own property owners and taxpayers.

Grace Schmidt, Alamo

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4 Course Bill of Fare

Appetizer
Soup or Salad
Choice of Entrée

Mezzaluna (Homemade pasta stuffed with cheese & spinach)
Lobster in a champagne sauce
Mezzo e Mezzo (Lamb Shank and Osso Buco together!)
Beef Ribeye Steak
Pettini alla Veneziana (Sautéed scallops in a reduction of Pinot Grigio)
Ragu di Vitello with Faggottino
Involtino di Pollo
Ahi Tuna Pizzaiola Style
Veal Eggplant Parmigiana
Vegetarian Eggplant Parmigiana

Dessert

Lunch Mon-Fri 11:30^{am}-2:30^{pm} • **Dinner** from 4:30^{pm} daily
Early Bird Menu Daily \$15.95
4:30^{pm}-6^{pm} Mon-Thur, 4:30^{pm}-5:30^{pm} Fri and Sat
Music and Dancing Fri-Sat 8:00^{pm} – 11:30^{pm}

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Grace

FOR ALAMO

A record of advocacy for Alamo

Grace Says

"Alamo is a small town that needs small local government. I am a proponent of conservative, responsible fiscal planning and management."

"Alamo residents love Alamo's trees, two-lane roads, and minimum half-acre zoning. The key to keeping our residential areas livable is to hold fast to not widening our roads and not accommodating more freeway traffic into our community."

"Alamo's families need more in-town recreation services, and I want to provide them."

"I want maximum citizen participation in the mandated creation of Alamo's own General Plan, which will happen thirty months into the new Town. I will move for quick action on appointments to Alamo's traditional citizen advisory committees, giving time for them to reach out and bring in representative citizen input."

www.graceforalamo.org

Grace's accomplishments in Alamo

- Got the word out to Alamo residents last year about plans to expand the Danville Boulevard/Stone Valley Road intersection, resulting in removal of the project from the Tri-Valley Transportation Council project list
- Found grounds for agreement among Board members of the Alamo Improvement Association, and crafted the AIA Alamo incorporation resolution
- Writes the AIA monthly page in Alamo Today
- Serves as writer/researcher for Alamo Community Foundation; member of Elections Committee of Alamo Incorporation Movement; and AIA Board member

Grace's background

Born and raised in the Bay Area, Grace attended local public schools and earned her Bachelor's and Master's degrees from the University of California, Berkeley. She worked as Congressional Field Representative in Alamo's Tenth Congressional District and as staff to county supervisors on two Bay Area county boards of supervisors.

Testimonials:

"Last year, Grace used her understanding of how government works to alert Alamo to a proposed unpopular expansion of our downtown intersection - the "Ultimate Configuration" - which would have brought more freeway traffic onto our roads. We need Grace on Alamo's first Town Council! "

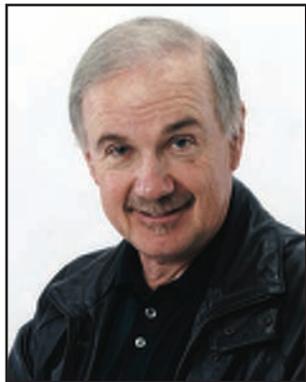
- John and Becky Whetten, 24-year residents of Alamo

"We believe if Grace is elected, she will do her job in the best interests of our community. Grace does her homework! "

- Bob and Claudia Waldron, 25-year residents of Alamo



Paid for by Friends of Grace Schmidt



ROGER SMITH

Having been active in the Alamo Improvement Association for 15 years, running for Town Council is an opportunity to continue what I have been doing already, giving back to our community. Traffic and safety are the main current issues that face Alamo, particularly in our downtown and major roadways. It is always a challenge. What can be done to improve our town center is an issue that should be discussed in more detail. Fiscal responsibility in all areas is my top budget priority. We need to start with the largest item in the budget first; law enforcement, and review all options and determine the best value. We also need to establish a reserve fund for contingencies and have a repayment plan for the \$3 million due to be paid to the County within 10 years.

Alamo has a rich history of volunteerism. We need to have all of our existing community organizations continue to participate and to provide a forum for them to do so. In addition, citizens panels, commissions and special project committees are all methods available to include residents in the process.

If we remain unincorporated, it is (and will remain) difficult to get attention from County Supervisors on issues important to Alamo when we only have 6% of the population for our district, one of five districts countywide.

I would like to be of service to Alamo in finding solutions that work for our community.

www.SmithAlamo.org



GRACE SCHMIDT

“A Record of Advocacy for Alamo”

Last year I learned about regional actions to widen the intersection of Danville Boulevard and Stone Valley Road, and I informed residents about the project (the “Ultimate Configuration”). Now, I’m running for Town Council because I want to see Alamo’s roads issues decided the way Alamo residents want them. I understand government entities and processes that determine roads and traffic patterns in the County, and I want to have a seat at the table when those entities meet.

The economic downturn and its impact on all local governments is Alamo’s biggest challenge and gravest threat to keeping Alamo as we want it. Because the County has crippling debt, and falling revenues, it must cut services, raise taxes - or both. If we become a town, keeping and managing our own healthy revenues, we can ensure the level of our police, parks, roads, and planning.

The professionals who developed the Fiscal Analysis, projected for ten years, and compare Alamo favorably to most cities. However, in this economic downturn, all governments must pay closer attention to revenue projections and investments. I’ll track actual revenues and expenditures compared to budgeted revenues and expenditures and initiate Council corrective action when variances occur. The incorporated town has the advantage of being able to contract for most employees, avoiding lifetime benefit commitments.

I believe Alamo has a soul that’s independent, unpretentious, appreciative of quality, and respectful of privacy. Alamo is a small town that needs small local government - not big county government, and not a lavish town government, but a prudent, efficient, and locally representative town government.

I’m extremely concerned if Alamo doesn’t become a town, it’ll be changed for the worse. The County has fewer resources each year to provide services. With its own unfunded obligations and its increasing need for new revenues, the County can be expected to, with legal right, continue to seek funding to develop Alamo according to the vision and economic needs of the County, not Alamo.

grace@graceforalamo.org | 925.683.0444 | www.graceforalamo.org

Meet the Candidates
 Sponsored by Alamo Improvement Association
An Informal Meeting with the Candidates for Alamo Town Council
 This will be Alamo’s second opportunity to dialogue with candidates individually and learn more of their views on incorporating Alamo, before Alamo votes on March 3rd
Thursday, February 12th, 7 – 9PM
 Creekside Community Church, 1350 Danville Blvd, Rear Conference Room



DIANE M. BARLEY

“There’s Corn, Wheat, Rye and Oats, but Barley’s the One Who Needs Your Vote!”

My husband and I moved to Alamo over 33 years ago. I appreciate what Alamo is through my years of involvement in the community. I’ve been involved in the schools, and have also been President of Alamo Rotary. I served on Zone 36 committee (Alamo Beautification), P5 (Round Hill Special Police District), an officer and President of AIA and presently on P2B (Alamo Special Police District) and Alamo Council. Working at a local bank for 15 years, I deal with fiscal responsibility daily. At the bank I’m very visible and accessible to the citizens of Alamo to listen and heed what they say, and that

is to keep Alamo locally governed, semi-rural and unchanged as much as possible.

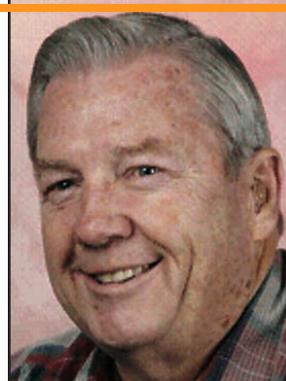
I do believe that Alamo has a “soul”. Confirmation of this...”It was a dark and stormy night...” and the turnout at the Candidates Faire was large. It really surprised me, but I think it shows how much people really care about Alamo. Secondly, the number of qualified candidates for office who are willing to volunteer their time and energy to be part of any transformation that will come about with incorporation is wonderful. I see and hear this at the bank nearly everyday, the citizens LOVE Alamo...so much so that most do not want it to change!

Including residents in local issues and challenges is important. Since I’m in touch with “Alamoites” on a daily basis: at the bank, the Post Office, Safeway... I am on the front line of what they want, like, dislike, needs, and concerns and I value those opinions. So I guess the whole town would be my advisory board!

As far as budget priorities, there needs to be a “rainy day” savings set aside for the unexpected. I think it is the unexpected expenses that sink many a ship!

If we do not incorporate, it is my understanding that the county will appoint a MAC for us... one way or another things will change in Alamo!

DiBarley@aol.com | 925.904.2072 | www.DianeBarley.com



BOB CONNELLY - “...Because I Care”

I am running because I feel it’s important for Alamo to have “self rule” and to begin with strong Financial and Interpersonal foundations. I don’t need another job, I am not a politician and I am only serving (if elected) for one term.

In addition, I am running because I was asked; because I feel I have the skills to help Alamo get started and because I want Alamo to succeed. It is difficult for Alamo citizens to have their concerns heard and to obtain resolution of the issues, to wit, traffic problems in the downtown area. I believe the citizens of Alamo need and deserve a caring group of people to bring Alamo together and provide the leadership necessary to ensure Alamo continues to be a great place to live. I’ll do everything possible to involve the citizens of

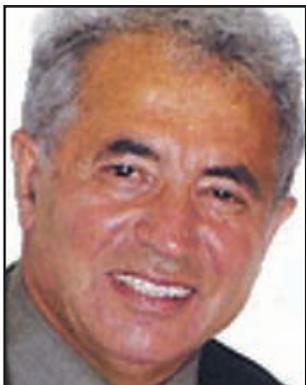
Alamo in the governing process; create leadership groups to provide input and assist in planning.

If incorporation fails, I believe that we’ll slowly merge into Walnut Creek and especially, Danville. We’ll be “squeezed” by their decisions on roads, traffic and public use and most likely be reduced in size by slow minor annexations. If this happens, Alamo will not have financial resources to stand alone. In addition as the County continues to be squeezed financially, more and more of our tax revenue will be used in other areas of the County.

My wife and I have lived in Alamo for 19 years. My Banking career spans 33 years including 5 years as a Chief Operating Officer and 3 years as a Chief Executive Officer. I strongly believe in dealing openly, honestly and fairly with all people and I know the importance of proper fiscal planning. Currently, I am President of the Alamo Oaks Homeowners Association. I also work on our local precinct election board. I strongly believe that I can help ensure that Alamo continues to be a special place.

cbob799@comcast.net | 925.820.6884 | www.BobConnelly.org

VOTE MARCH 3rd



KARL K. NIYATI

“Expressing the aims or nature of an organization, will start with my vision for the people of Alamo.”

Alamo will be a town where past, present, and future come together. It will continue to value: a superior education for our children, ready access to recreational activities, fun town festivities, a safe and secure environment for all, thriving businesses, and appreciation of senior experiences.

I’d like to promote the concept of Alamo becoming a model city into reality; in which the Town of Alamo becomes inaugurated historically, and the people, become involved and participate in the vision of this town with us. To celebrate its birth, to accommodate the overdue festivities in every aspect of life, a city hall with highest technology, an activities center, a Fourth of July celebration and parade, marathons for causes, farmer’s special organic markets, and thriving businesses. These will show to all that committing to these values will enhance our quality of life and enduring happiness.

My motivation to run as a council member is to give back my service to the community I have raised my family in for 25 years. My years of experience as a Kaiser hospital leader, a motivational coach, along with communication skills from teaching, and my commitment to small business successes like the one I built, Alamo Creek Restaurant is what I have to offer. This community has a lot of soul and my aim is to enhance

the existing character and add to it when appropriate. I have seen many changes in Alamo and am deeply invested in it’s future. I credit this community and it’s people for much of my success.

I have the proven ability to recruit qualified staff, experience to negotiate the best services for residents, and background to plan solutions for future challenges of Alamo. I am motivated to utilize my unique business management and entrepreneurial skills by drawing upon my financial planning and real-life leadership experience.

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